

should have objected to the proposition without any qualifications that no alteration from long accustomed ritual should be made contrary to the admonition of the Bishops. I would at all events insert the words "unless it be alleged that such alteration is made in conformity with the written law of the Church." For although it is theoretically true, that nothing should be done without the Bishop, yet practically, under present circumstances, and where Bishops act autocratically, not by and with the advice of any council, the clergy under such a rule would be under different laws, so that what is lawful in one diocese might be unlawful in the next, and what is sanctioned by one Bishop might be prohibited by his successor. There are some Bishops who would endeavour to suppress things, which by others are considered almost necessary to the order and decency of our services.

But it may be said that this plea of acting in conformity with the laws of the Church is urged by the most lawless of the clergy, and that the chief difficulty arises from their refusal to accept the interpretation of those laws as determined by legitimate authority. Now I must admit that I think these men ought not to be indiscriminately condemned, and that, while we are bound ordinarily to accept the decisions of our Courts, as determining the interpretation of the law, there are special circumstances connected with the judgments of the Judicial Committee which may justify a conscientious disregard of them. Without referring at all to the constitution of that Court of Appeal, or denying that the final decision must rest with the Secular Courts wherever personal rights are concerned, I cannot allow that the judgments of the Committee claim that deference which has long been rendered by Englishmen to the higher Courts. When it is notorious that such men as Lord Coleridge and the present Lord Chancellor impugned the judgment in the *Purchas* case, and that the Chief Baron and Sir R. Phillimore (with probably Judge Amphlett), have regarded the judgment in the *Ridsdale* case as dictated by policy rather than by the principles on which the judgments of strictly Law Courts are framed, I think that great allowance should be made for men who, taking the English language in its plain grammatical signification, and having studied the history of the whole question as fully (to say the least), as the members of the Committee, feel themselves bound to act on the interpretation of the laws which in their